



Through
MY FATHER'S
EYES



FRANKLIN
GRAHAM

with Donna Lee Toney

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Donna Lee Toney



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Through My Father's Eyes
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Contents

<i>Foreword: From the words of Billy Graham</i>	v
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. My Father in Heaven	7
2. Made in China	19
3. The Bible Says . . .	41
4. For Those Watching by Television	61
5. Pray, Pray, Pray	87
6. Preach the Word	109
7. Just Write to Me . . . That's All the Address You Need	135
8. About My Father's Business	159
9. You're Not Coming to Me . . .	185
10. In His Steps	211
11. From Stepping-Stones to Milestones	235
12. High Noon: The Hour of Decision for America	253
13. Legacy	277
<i>Postscript</i>	299
<i>Afterword: Beyond the End</i>	301
<i>Notes</i>	309

Foreword

From the words of Billy Graham

Keep your soul diligently,
so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen
and . . . make them known to your sons.

—DEUTERONOMY 4:9 NASB

Someday I hope to write a book on the subject of “The End.”¹ When we all reach the end of our earthly journey, we will have just begun.²

The word *departure* literally means “to pull up anchor and set sail.” Everything that happens prior to death is a preparation for the final voyage. Death marks the beginning, not the end. It is our journey to God.³

For centuries mankind has been on an incredible journey taking him across every generation and through every conceivable experience in his search for God.⁴

Like every other journey, it has a starting point . . . and it has an end. . . . God meant for life to be filled with joy and purpose. He invites us to take the rest of our journey with Him.⁵

The entire world is in turmoil. We are living in a time of enormous

conflict and cultural transformation. We have been stunned by shock-waves of change in nation after nation, all around the globe.⁶

We have seen the results of unrestrained greed, corruption, and manipulation on Wall Street, financial mismanagement in the halls of government, fraud and perversion at the highest levels of both church and state. Many people sense the possibility of an even greater unraveling in the world. We are constantly confronted by the realities of new problems in this age of crisis.⁷

We have at our fingertips every pleasure that man is capable of enjoying, and man has abused every gift God ever gave him.⁸

The promoters of change offer a grand vision of world unity. While the globalists and international affairs specialists continue their chant for “peace, peace,” we are reminded that the Bible says that there can be no lasting peace until Christ returns. So the world remains restless and uncertain.⁹

We are preoccupied with material things. Our supreme god is technology; our goddess is sex. Most of us are more interested in conquering space than conquering ourselves. We are more dedicated to material security than to inner purity. We give much more thought to what we wear, what we eat, what we drink, and what we can do to relax than we give to what we are. This preoccupation with peripheral things applies to every area of our lives.¹⁰

No matter how much you exercise, no matter how many vitamins or health foods you eat, no matter how low your cholesterol, you will still die—someday. If you knew the moment and manner of your death in advance, would you order your life differently?¹¹

We read every day about the rich, the famous, and the talented who are disillusioned. Many of them are turning to the occult or Eastern religions. Some are turning to crime. The questions they thought were answered are left dangling: What is man? Where did he come from? What is his purpose on this planet? Where is he going? Is there a God who cares? If there is a God, has He revealed Himself to man?¹²

FOREWORD

Our educational establishment has been brainwashed into thinking that its job is to educate the mind and build the body but to leave untouched the deeper questions that are essentially spiritual.¹³

The soul actually demands as much attention as the body. The soul was made for God, and without God it is restless and in secret torment.¹⁴

Truly, the world is in need of moral leadership that teaches the difference between right and wrong and teaches us to forgive one another even as we are forgiven by our Father in heaven. We do not need a new moral order; the world desperately needs the tried and tested moral order that God handed down.¹⁵

The good news is that we aren't alone. Not only did God carve out the path for us, but He wants to join us on the journey—to help us with challenges along the way, and eventually lead us home.¹⁶

The most important decision you will ever make is about eternity. Christ wants to give you hope for the future. He wants you to learn what it means to walk with Him every day. When you come to Christ, God gives you eternal life—which begins right now as you open your heart to Him.¹⁷

God requires something of us. We must confess our spiritual poverty, renounce our sins, and turn by faith to His Son, Jesus Christ. When we do that, we are born again. He gives us a new nature. He puts a little bit of heaven down in our souls.¹⁸

The central theme of the universe is the purpose and destiny of every individual. Every person is important in God's eyes.¹⁹

Man has two great spiritual needs. One is for forgiveness. The other is for goodness.²⁰

I like announcing good news, but I cannot speak only of the good news.²¹

The world seems to be spinning faster and faster. Technology and time itself are racing past us at dizzying speeds. Who can keep up? Where will it end? We have to wonder if there are any answers for the

crises of our time. But we must also ask if there is still hope for us—or is it as bad as we often fear?²²

God undertook the most dramatic rescue operation in cosmic history. He determined to save the human race from self-destruction, and He sent His Son Jesus Christ to salvage and redeem it. The work of man's redemption was accomplished at the cross.²³

When I picture Christ hanging on the cross, the spikes in His hands, the crown of thorns on His brow, the blood shed for our sins, I see the picture of God's grace toward men. Nothing can equal God's infinite love for sinful men.²⁴

Ultimately, every human being must face this question: What do you think of Christ? Whose Son is He? We must answer this question with belief and action. We must not only *believe* something about Jesus; we must *do* something about Him. We must accept Him or reject Him.²⁵

We must understand what this word *believe* implies. It means “commit” and “surrender.” In every true conversion the will of man comes into line with the will of God.²⁶

In my early teens I heard a prominent preacher say that after several thousand years of suffering the wicked would have a second opportunity for salvation. This sounded good to me. I could live as I liked here, and if I rejected salvation, I would still have another chance! But as I studied the Word of God carefully, I did not find one verse of Scripture that even hinted or indicated that there will be a second chance after death. Voltaire, the French atheist, said as he lay on his deathbed, “I am taking a fearful leap into the dark.” But the Bible says, “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2 KJV). What you do with Christ here and now decides where you shall spend eternity. Have you made preparation?²⁷

The greatest, most exciting journey you could ever experience isn't always an easy journey, but even in the midst of our problems,

temptations, and sorrows, life can be different. Most of all, it is a journey of hope, because it leads us to heaven.²⁸ The privilege of being in touch with heaven right now greatly enhances our time on earth. Knowing that heaven is real, and that we will be there someday, makes a great difference in the way we live. For one thing, heaven gives us hope—hope for today and hope for the future. No matter what we’re facing, we know it is temporary, and ahead of us is heaven.²⁹

Though cultures differ and times change, the Word of our God stands forever as an unchanging source of answers to all of life’s problems. Every problem known to mankind has a spiritual origin. I have yet to discover a source of information, practical advice, and hope that compares to the wisdom found in the Bible.³⁰

I am an evangelist, not a scholar.³¹ The apostle Paul wrote, “I . . . did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1–2).

If anything has been accomplished through my life, it has been solely God’s doing, not mine, and He—not I—must get the credit.³²

The same Gospel message God the Father gave to Jesus, He passed on to His disciples. This is the same message I have tried to proclaim and pass on to generations after me, just as the Bible has commanded.³³ Today the only bright spot on the horizon is the promise of the coming again of Christ. This is God’s message. Do you think He is coming back? I don’t think it; I know He’s coming back—and soon. This is [the reason] for my hope.³⁴ Heaven is glorious. Heaven is perfect. Heaven is joyous, and heaven is active; but can we know—really know—that it is also certain? . . . The Bible says yes!³⁵

The most thrilling thing to me about heaven is that Jesus Christ will be there. I will see Him face to face. . . . He will meet me at the end of life’s journey.³⁶ So when you read or hear that Billy Graham is dead, don’t you believe a word of it! I shall be more alive than I

FOREWORD

am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God.³⁷ This is the reason for my hope—salvation.



One of God's greatest gifts given to man on earth is the joy of family. My wife, Ruth, and I were blessed with five wonderful children. In 1952 we welcomed our first son into the world. His birth record certifies him as William Franklin Graham III, but we call him Franklin.

With four females in the house, Franklin especially may have craved my companionship. Ruth was right. I missed the children as they grew. But I have had the joy of working with all of them in some aspect of ministry since they became adults.

I watched Franklin run from Christ as a teenager, I challenged him to settle things with God as a young man in 1974, and I rejoiced to ordain him for the Gospel ministry in 1982. In the strange ways of providence, God led Franklin into worldwide ministry to those who suffer from diseases and disasters through his leadership of Samaritan's Purse and now, also, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). Sensitivity to the needs of others is his consuming passion. He is driven not only by humanitarian generosity and disciplined business sense, but most of all he has a real yearning to see people come to know Christ.

Over the years I was thrilled to have him join me on many trips, to Eastern Europe, China, and the Middle East, places I never dreamed God would open doors for the Gospel to be preached. Now as an effective evangelist himself and president and CEO of the BGEA, his election to these roles not only ensures the continuity of our ministry but also signals a renewed commitment by the board of directors to the vision for world evangelism. We are grateful for our past and expectant for our future.

When Franklin was a boy and I was able to be home, I would take him up to a special spot on the mountain where we would spend time

FOREWORD

together. Years later when I became housebound, I looked forward to Franklin's visits on weekends when he was not traveling the world. We would take Sunday afternoon walks together and share the joys and challenges of family and ministry.

Franklin is now carrying on much of my own vision while expanding it to include what the Lord has put on his heart. Our visions of hope are included in these pages, and I say with the apostle Paul, "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" (2 Corinthians 4:18 NIV).

I invite you to go on a thrilling, adventuresome journey that testifies about the work of the Lord. I pray that you will see it through the eyes of our Father in heaven. To Him all hearts will turn and upon Him all eyes will rest.³⁸

—BILLY GRAHAM

Montreat, North Carolina

June 2009



This foreword has been compiled from the writings of Billy Graham spanning seven decades (1947–2013). Whether he penned these nuggets of truth in the mid-twentieth century or the beginning of the new millennium, his words are as relevant to our nation and world as they were when he began proclaiming the Gospel in the 1940s. These are treasured excerpts that, mingled together, paint a picture of man's greatest need satisfied by his Savior's salvation freely offered through God's amazing grace.

Preface

Karl Rove, who served as deputy chief of staff for President George W. Bush, called my cell phone one evening and said, “Franklin, the president asked me to phone you. He wants to honor your father in some way. Doesn’t he have a birthday soon?”

I had talked with Karl on occasion, but this call took me aback. Four weeks had passed since the terrorist attack and fatal collapse of the twin towers on 9/11. With all the president had on his mind, he was thinking of my father.

Arrangements were made, and on the eve of my father’s eighty-third birthday, November 6, 2001, President and Mrs. Bush welcomed the Graham family to the White House for a small, private dinner. When the president clasped my father’s hand and looked into his eyes, there was a connection between the two that spoke of the milestones shared between them.

President Bush welcomed us and encouraged us to enjoy “the People’s House.” He took us through adjoining rooms, graciously sharing historical anecdotes. As a prelude to dinner, the First Couple served

punch and extended hospitality beyond description, making sure we were all comfortable and cared for.

I was particularly concerned for my mother because she had been in poor health. I had doubted whether she could even make the trip to Washington, DC. As I looked around the room to see where my parents were, I saw President Bush walking through the room holding my mother's hand, his other hand on my father's shoulder. He led them to wingback chairs and hovered over them, seeing to their comfort. When I observed the loving attention my parents received from President Bush, I decided their eldest son should remain in the shadows. My mind snapped a picture of this very tender moment. The leader of the free world had taken on the role of a son. Perhaps the president in some way felt as though he was a spiritual son, since he and my father had shared a very special moment years before, when they took a walk together along the Maine shore in 1985. According to President Bush, my father's words that day planted a mustard seed of faith in his soul.

There was no White House staff in view. The president had taken charge of the evening and gathered us into the dining room, where tables were beautifully set. The president hosted my mother at one table, and Laura Bush hosted my father at another.

"Franklin, please sit down," President Bush said with a grin. He had asked my father's secretary, Stephanie Wills, who might pray before the meal, and he liked her suggestion. "I'm looking around at all the preachers, wondering who might say grace, but I've decided to do it myself."

He asked us to bow our heads. He began to pray, not from a written prayer but from the heart. To recount the prayer word for word would be impossible, but it was memorable. With humility that was felt around the room, President Bush prayed for the citizens of our great country and thanked the Lord for seeing our nation through a critical time. Then he asked God to bless the evening and thanked "the Almighty" for the impact the heavenly Father had made in his own life through Billy Graham.

PREFACE

Following the meal, the first lady gave a signal and the White House chef entered the dining room with a beautifully decorated birthday cake. The president asked Cliff Barrows to lead everyone in singing “Happy Birthday to You.”

After pictures were taken, President Bush reminded us that “all good people should be in bed soon.” With handshakes and hugs, we departed 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. A White House staffer told us as we left that the evening was a welcomed reprieve for the president, who had been carrying the heavy burden of that unforgettable September morning.

One month later, our family was invited once again to the nation’s capital. Queen Elizabeth had written my father months before, wanting to bestow on him the title of Knight Commander in the Order of the British Empire. Because of my father’s unstable health, he was not able to travel to England to receive the award at Buckingham Palace. Her Majesty the Queen requested that the ceremony be conducted by British ambassador Sir Christopher Meyer, at the British Embassy.

Upon receiving this high honor, my father said,

With humility and unworthiness, I take [this high honor] as a symbol of the common historical ties that have bound our two nations together in war and in peace. I read a quote that appeared in *The Daily News* in 1903 about Queen Victoria. After hearing a sermon about Christ’s return to earth, Queen Victoria said, “Oh how I wish that the Lord might come during my lifetime.” When asked why, she replied, “I should like to lay my crown at His feet.” And that’s the way I feel tonight about any honor that may come to me. I’d like to lay it at His feet . . . and at my age, it won’t be too long. Tonight I would like to say, God bless the United Kingdom, and may God bless Her Majesty the Queen.¹

My father would be the first to say that his life should not be defined by honors, awards, and achievements. In his last years of life

PREFACE

he told me many times, “An evangelist is called to do one thing: proclaim the Gospel. Anything else dilutes the evangelist’s impact and compromises his message.” It is one of the great lessons he taught me by example. I have learned a great deal from a man who has been many things to many people.

As I shared some of my reflections over lunch several years ago with my friend and publishing giant Sam Moore, he shoved back from the table and said, “Franklin, I encourage you to begin now writing down these lessons because others can benefit from what you have learned from your father.” Sam’s words seemed to take root in my thoughts, just as lessons learned from my father had taken root in my life.

This book reflects lessons not only from my earthly father; but as work progressed over the past several years, it became clear that the lessons were proven worthy because they were grounded in the truth of Scripture.

My father has left behind a trail of victories and, yes, some regrets. I suspect that I will continue to learn from my father even in his death and pray that the Lord will grant me the grace to finish as he did: strong in God’s power and truth. In his autobiography he wrote, “More than anything else, I yearn for people to understand the message of Christ and accept it as their own.”²

That very message is the theme of this book, written the way I have seen it—through my father’s eyes.

—FRANKLIN GRAHAM
Boone, North Carolina

Introduction

I have covered you with the shadow of My hand.

—ISAIAH 51:16

Billy Graham lived a remarkable life in the presence of his family and in view of the world. People will come to their own conclusions about him, but no one can speak more insightfully than a son who grew up in the shadow of his love.

Webster's Dictionary defines *shadow* as an "inseparable companion."¹ When my father was away, Mama was that shadow of influence of the man I have always referred to as Daddy. In my eyes, they were the true representation of what the Bible means for husband and wife to become one.

During my childhood, I watched my father come and go, pack again, and then rush through the front door to a waiting car as he kissed my mother and us children goodbye. Sometimes his absence was for two weeks, two months, and on occasion even longer. No matter the length of the journey, his goodbye was followed by a promise: "I'll be back." The assurance was tucked inside the pocket of his overcoat, next to his heart—a round-trip ticket.

INTRODUCTION

My father visited nearly every continent on earth multiple times. But there was one trip he longed to make—a trip *out* of this world. When my father traveled to heaven, he did so with a one-way ticket, purchased more than two thousand years ago with the lifeblood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He completed a journey that required no baggage—no return ticket. His destiny was certain.

While my father looked forward to heaven, he dreaded the process of dying. For years he suffered from Parkinson's-like symptoms, caused by a buildup of fluid in the brain known as normal pressure hydrocephalus, along with various other ailments. However, with each passing birthday, the process became less burdensome, particularly after watching my mother leave their home for her eternal home on June 14, 2007. It seemed that part of my father went with her.

Though he had spent countless weeks away from her during his busy life, the sudden loneliness of her absence caused him a great deal of reflection. The realization that she wouldn't be coming back deepened his desire to leave their log home in Little Piney Cove and make his final journey to be with her in heaven forever.

While my father anticipated being reunited with my mother, the hope that anchored him was to look to his Savior and fix his eyes on the One he had preached about for seven decades. He spoke of it often, saying, "The most thrilling thing to me about heaven is that Jesus Christ will be there. I will see Him face-to-face."

Call from God

Billy Graham was focused—riveted to a call from God.

He was a man who realized his inability and grasped God's authority.

He was convicted by the message God put in his heart and comprehended its power.

He understood his calling and God's leading.

He set his hands to a heavenly task and firmly placed both feet on the narrow road, opposite the global highway, and followed the steps of the Lord wherever they led.

What God did through the life of Billy Graham is beyond a storehouse of words.

During his 1949 Los Angeles tent meeting, a clergyman lodged a complaint against my father, accusing him of setting the cause of religion back a hundred years. When my father heard this, he replied, “I did indeed want to set religion back—not just a hundred years but nineteen hundred years, to the Book of Acts, where first-century followers of Christ were accused of turning the Roman Empire upside down.”²

No one thrives on criticism, but my father resolved not to let it distract him from his God-given task—to serve the Lord Jesus Christ with his life, and to “do what is right in the eyes of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 13:18).

The Big Leagues

Prior to his conversion as a teenager, my father set his sights on making his mark in the big leagues—baseball, that is. His dream was no different than that of many other boys his age: to play with the New York Yankees. His hero was Babe Ruth. In fact, my grandfather arranged for him to meet the “King of Swat” when he played an exhibition game in my father’s hometown of Charlotte, North Carolina.

It’s no wonder that when my grandparents took my dad to hear Billy Sunday preach in Charlotte a few years later, my father was captivated. When this athlete-turned-evangelist leaned over the edge of the platform, lifted his Bible dramatically, and proclaimed, “The Bible says,” it made an impact in the heart of this young, impressionable country boy.

My grandmother, whom we always called Mother Graham, said, “It was Billy Sunday’s preaching that kept Billy Frank on the edge of his seat. Life after that was never quite the same.”³

INTRODUCTION

The revival meeting, held in a gigantic frame tabernacle on the outskirts of town, also had an impact on my grandfather and twenty-nine other men from Charlotte, including T. Walter Wilson Sr. (father of Daddy's friends, Grady and T. W. Wilson). In a book written by Mordecai Ham's nephew, Edward E. Ham, he told about this "band of men" who prayed that God would send revival to Charlotte and that "it might spread over the state, then out to the ends of the world!"⁴ Little did my grandfather realize that God would answer this prayer by calling his eldest son into a worldwide ministry.

In 1934, evangelist Mordecai Ham held a revival in Charlotte. "A great giant of a man [preached] in such a way as I had never heard," my father recalled. "Halfway through his message he pointed right in my direction and said, 'Young man, you are a sinner.' I thought he was talking to me, so I ducked behind the person in front of me and hid my face! 'Why, I'm as good as anybody,' I told myself. But then he began to quote Scripture, 'There is none righteous, no not one.' For the first time in my life I realized that I was a sinner, that my soul was bound for hell and that I needed a Savior."⁵

The next night my father walked down the aisle, repented of his sin, and received God's forgiveness and the Savior's love. It was in that meeting my father surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. What a legacy.

An Innovative Ministry

My father grew up during the Great Depression and understood the hardships created by World War II. Across the nation, home life suffered as men went to battle and women went to work. This shift in the workforce altered American culture and created problems that changed family life. When the war ended and the United States began to rebound, commercial air travel allowed people to move quickly and families began to scatter.

My father sensed the urgency of God's call in his life and utilized the

latest technology to create a launching pad for mass evangelism, enabling him to communicate a never-changing message through ever-changing forms of technology. He was a pioneer in using the power of radio and television to spread the Good News.

Though man might take credit for modern technology, it was Creator God who opened the way. Still today, it is God who places innovative spirits in the minds and hearts of His creation. And it is God who placed in my father's heart a passion for souls.

I saw through my father's eyes what the Lord can do with a life surrendered to Him. He taught me how to live by example. The Bible says, "My son, . . . let your eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26).

My father left behind a testimony to God, a legacy not buried in a grave but still pointing people to a heaven-bound destiny. The Lord will say to my father, and to all who served Him obediently, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Lift Up Your Eyes

Throughout his life my father enjoyed retreating to a rocker on the front porch—breathing the fresh mountain air, listening to the gentle summer wind, and watching the leaves turn gold in the fall.

Not long ago I visited my parents' home in Little Piney Cove. They loved that log house that sits at the side of a ridge thirty-two hundred feet above sea level, overlooking the Blue Ridge Mountains and a portion of Pisgah National Forest. Sitting there on the porch, I leafed through my Bible and read, "Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; *behold it with your eyes*" (Deuteronomy 3:27).

Though my father longed to spend more time with his family at home, when he lifted his eyes and looked to the north, south, east, and west, he realized the corners of the world were still in darkness. And after a little rest, he packed up and carried on.

My father didn't dwell on the past. He had an unusual ability to focus on what was in front of him. He drew strength from knowing that God would guide him along his journey to do his part in reaching a lost and dying world for Christ.

The Bible says, "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Through the Father's Eyes

My father left behind a legacy that will be carried into future generations, and the Father in heaven is calling others to step into His pathway. "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established" (Proverbs 4:26).

The Bible says, "Give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them" (Proverbs 4:20–22).

The earliest memories of my parents are bound up in the unconditional love they demonstrated in our home, but it wasn't without their guidance and correction. My wife, Jane Austin, and I have tried to follow their example. As my father many times so wonderfully credited his wife for fulfilling the role of both mother and father because of his long absences, I, too, express my love to Jane for providing a loving home for our children and constantly being there for them.

While working on this book, I reflected on the relationship I enjoyed with my father for sixty-five years. Even though I dreaded the day my father would no longer be just a short journey away, I wanted to end the book with his journey to heaven because this was his greatest longing, to finally see life through the eyes of his Father in heaven.

I

My Father in Heaven

They desire . . . a heavenly country.
Therefore God . . . has prepared a city for them.

— HEBREWS 11:16



My home is in heaven. I'm just traveling through this world.

BILLY GRAHAM

“I will travel anywhere in the world to preach,” my father once said, “if there are no strings on what I am to say.” And travel he did: on ocean liners and in postwar automobiles before interstates rolled out across America. Then the jet age roared into the mid-twentieth century, and my father became known as a globe-trotter for God, but it wasn’t without turbulence. He determined early in his journey that the Word of God was the only road map he needed to guide him along the highways of life, spattered with potholes.

“Ruth and I have said goodbye many times in our life together,” my father wrote. “Sometimes we were separated by oceans and time differences. But the absences made the homecoming much sweeter.”¹

It may seem a little strange, then, to say that as a boy I lived many exciting moments through my father's eyes, since he was gone so much. My mother would share stories about what he was doing wherever he was in the world, grabbing our attention with the slightest detail. When he returned home, it felt in some ways as though we had been with him the whole time.

I can recall him describing a voyage on the SS *United States*, recounting the ship as it sliced its way through the Atlantic storms. His hand glided through the air, demonstrating how the vessel maneuvered into dock at Southampton, England. He was a great storyteller. Every scene he described I saw clearly through his penetrating eyes, as blue as the sky over North Carolina where we lived.

Through my father's eyes, I was introduced to six of the seven continents of the world: Asia, Africa, North and South America, Europe, and Australia. Learning about different cultures and exotic locations inspired my childhood imagination. My father and mother exposed me to the possibilities of serving God with my life, and their example molded and shaped me to follow in step where the Lord would lead. As I learned about the world through my earthly father's eyes, little did I realize that someday I would experience for myself the world's diversity through the eyes of my Father in heaven.

A Father's Forgiveness

The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is a message my father and I both have preached many times. There is much in the story I could relate to in my late teens. Not that I rebelled against my father as the prodigal son did, but at that time in my life I certainly did not share my father's commitment to serving the Lord with all my heart, soul, and

body. I respected everything he believed, preached, and lived, but I was not about to follow in my father's footsteps. I was not interested in seeing the world through his eyes anymore. I wanted to feast my eyes on what the world could offer me—and I did for a time.

I will never forget the day I drove home to North Carolina after being expelled from LeTourneau College in Texas. Dread swelled as I approached my parents' log home in the Blue Ridge Mountains. I imagined my father's look of disapproval when he would fix his eyes on his eldest son and namesake, who had failed to make him proud.

But when I rounded the last curve, my father's long legs stepped off the porch and he walked toward me with arms wide open. Following a gripping hug, I looked into my father's forgiving eyes.

I often think of that moment when I stand in the pulpit and watch as men, women, and children answer God's call to repentance. When they bow in prayer, confessing their sin to God, and receive His salvation, surely they look into the forgiving eyes of the Savior, who loves them unconditionally and provides all they need to begin a new walk in His steps.

Though I never had visions of following in my father's footsteps, his world travel sounded exciting to me. I recall hearing a friend of his talk about two missionary ladies who needed a four-wheel-drive Land Rover for their hospital work in northern Jordan. When my father agreed to buy one for them, I immediately devised a plan to pick it up in England and drive it across Europe and into the Middle East. When I shared the idea with my father, I thought I could fool him by using a spiritual-sounding excuse to not return to college. "If you'll buy the Land Rover, Daddy, I'll deliver it to Jordan and stay and help those missionaries finish building their hospital."

His eyes glared. Mine stared—waiting for his response. After my parents discussed the pros and cons, my father concluded that maybe an experience like that was just what God had in mind for my troubled soul. In his wisdom, my father understood that I was probably going

to sow some wild oats. He was smart enough to realize that some seed just might fall on fertile desert sand, opening the door for the Holy Spirit to blow a seed of faith into my calloused heart.

My father was a true Southern gentleman. When he was not in the pulpit, he spoke softly. His words were tender, gracious, and kind. In contrast, when he preached, his eyes snapped with passion and were fixed on one thing—the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. His heart was anchored to his calling to preach the Word of God.

My father was a friend to presidents, a counselor to world leaders, and a confidant to royalty. In his early interviews with the media, they ridiculed and acclaimed him. I have learned through my father's eyes that the all-important thing to hold on to in good times and bad is the Anchor—Jesus Christ. I believe my father's steadfastness found favor in the eyes of the heavenly Father because God granted him more than seventy years in service to the King of kings.

The foundational message my father preached became a banner for his meetings. In John 14:6, Jesus said,

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

In bigger-than-life letters, this Bible verse was stretched across the platform, symbolizing the crux of what would be heard from the pulpit: “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (the Lord Jesus Christ). Billy Graham never wavered from this singular message. It wasn't, however, without criticism. His steely blue eyes stared beyond it and fastened with assurance to the Author, who penetrates men's hearts with this same message today.

Andraé Crouch wrote lyrics to a song that most Christians can identify with:

I thank God for the mountains,
And I thank Him for the valleys;
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through;
For if I'd never had a problem,
I wouldn't know that He could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could do.
Through it all,
Through it all,
Oh I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all,
Through it all,
*Oh I've learned to depend upon His Word.*²

This is certainly true of my father. There were many times that my father struggled to understand God's truth, but the outcome was always the same: he learned to depend upon God's Word. His worldwide travel proliferated a global awareness of the message he preached—the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Until the day he died, my father held tight to the claims of Christ that confront the human race about the ultimate choice—where to spend eternity. He preached on heaven many times, warning listeners to prepare to meet Almighty God. Every soul will meet Him someday, either in heaven, where Christ reigns, or at the throne of judgment, where all those without Christ will be doomed.

To proclaim the truths of heaven is thrilling. The reality of hell is daunting, but it also must be preached. My friend Dr. John MacArthur has boldly stated, “The most loving message a preacher of the Gospel can proclaim is the reality of hell, because it sounds the alarm—warning sinners to repent and turn to the Savior—the hope of heaven.”³ The Bible says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3).

The Snare

There are many things I have learned in my own ministry by observing my father through the years. I have drawn from his example and have learned important lessons on how to handle the good that comes and, even at times, the snares. Believers in Jesus Christ will face traps throughout life; this is Satan's clever method of stealing joy and victory in the life of a Christian.

One of the last print interviews my father did was with Jon Meacham, managing editor of *Newsweek*. In his cover story, Jon went right to the heart of evangelism when he asked my father if "heaven will be closed to good Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or secular people." The printed reply from my father stated, "It would be foolish for me to speculate on who will be [in heaven] and who won't."⁴

WorldNetDaily dissected this interview with blasting judgment, stating, "Meacham describes Graham's embrace of universalism in glowing terms" and "calls Graham 'a resolute Christian who declines to render absolute verdicts about who will get into heaven and who will not' and as someone who 'refuses to be judgmental.'"⁵

My father was dismayed when he saw this statement in print. He was deeply discouraged that after a life of preaching God's truth, it *appeared* that he had failed to complete his answer.

Jon Meacham's evaluation, in part, is actually true. Billy Graham cannot render absolute verdicts about who will be in heaven and who will not, but he preached and wrote about the One who will make those judgments, based on the heart and soul of the Gospel: all who receive eternal life must repent of sin, accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and follow Him in obedience. If there were any other way, there would have been no need for the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross and there would be no Gospel. This is what my father preached his entire life.

The Truth

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

What is the will of the Father? “Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Galatians 1:3–4). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

So will some perish? “The Lord . . . is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

What about those who do not repent? “In accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who *‘will render to each one according to his deeds’*” (Romans 2:5–6).

So, then, the answer is found in Scripture to the question, can those who reject Christ as Savior be saved? “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world” (John 3:19 NIV). “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 NIV). “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

It is important to point out that religions do not reject Christ; people do. Religion is a belief system built upon man’s ideas. Nowhere in the Bible do religious systems have a claim on heaven. Men’s souls are bound for heaven or hell. Christians do not follow religion; they follow their Father in heaven by obedience and absolute faith in His Son Jesus Christ according to the Word of God—this is our road map to living life in His name.

These truths are contained in the body of work—in spoken and written form—compiled by my father that thoroughly answers these

questions that pull at the heartstrings of all people. From the crusade pulpit to the press conference podium, my father clearly stated his position through the years. In his book *Facing Death—And the Life After*, he wrote,

Some teach “universalism”—that eventually everybody will be saved and the God of love will never send anyone to hell. They believe the words “eternal” or “everlasting” do not actually mean forever. However, the same word that speaks of eternal banishment from God is also used for the eternity of heaven.

The person being presented for entrance into heaven must be admitted on the basis of God's grace alone, not by any good works or noble deeds done on earth. Our only right for admission to heaven lies in the provision God made for our sins: His Son Jesus Christ.

Will a loving God send a man to hell? The answer from Jesus and the teachings of the Bible is, clearly, “Yes!” He does not send man willingly, but man condemns himself to eternal hell because of his blindness, stubbornness, egotism, and love of sinful pleasure. He refuses God's way of salvation and the hope of eternal life with Him.

Some believe God gives a second chance. But the Bible says, “Now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). The Bible teaches there is hell for every person who rejects Christ as Lord and Savior. “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41–42 NIV).⁶

The Blood-Stained Label

In answer to Jon Meacham's question, there will be no religions or sects in heaven—only the redeemed, those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb. “You were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but

with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Many have been steeped in philosophies instead of the truth, trapped by “another gospel,” thinking they will go to heaven by believing half-truths. The apostle Paul told Timothy,

Command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths. . . . These promote controversies rather than God’s work—which is by faith. . . . Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk . . . and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1 Timothy 1:3–4, 6, 10–11 NIV)

This was a continual theme in Paul’s preaching, indicating the confusion caused by preaching “another gospel”:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. (Colossians 2:8–10 NIV)

When men and women are saved out of darkness, they no longer identify with their former belief systems. Receiving Christ means a complete turning away from heresy to the absolute truth.

In my father’s book *Hope for the Troubled Heart*, he wrote, “I believe that if people paid more attention to death, eternity, and judgment, there would be more holy living on earth.”⁷ The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

My Father's Friend and Mine

A close and dear friend of my father, Roy Gustafson, became a father figure to me as a young man. My father encouraged me to travel and spend time with Roy.

Roy had a profound impact in my life. My wife and I named our second son after him. I was honored to preach his memorial service in 2002. I miss him still today.

Roy was well traveled. A gifted preacher in his own right, he became an ambassador to the land of the Bible for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). Not only did he have an in-depth understanding of Jewish history, but he was also able to dissect the trappings of world religions and unravel their claims.

In a message Roy often preached, he said, "There are thousands of religions, but there is only one Gospel. You see, religions come as a product of the reasonings of the human mind. The Gospel is the revelation of God's mind. Religions originate on earth. The Gospel originated in heaven. Religions are man-made. The Gospel is the gift of God. Religions—all of them—are the story of what sinful people try to do for a holy God. The Gospel is the wonderful story of what a holy God has already done for sinful people. Religion is mankind's quest for God. The Gospel is the Savior-God seeking lost men and women. Religion is the opinions of sinful people—the Gospel is [God's] Good News."⁸

My father and Roy are now in heaven. No longer do they travel from city to city. They are now permanent residents in the city of God.

Heavenly Real Estate

One of the most important issues we face in life is where to live, work, and raise our families. We peruse the real estate market for the ideal location; we consider the cost of the best-built house and then push the

limit to obtain a bank loan, all for the purpose of providing the most comfortable living environment for our families. Yet the most important choice people will ever make in life is where they will spend eternity.

My father said, “We are so caught up with the affairs of this life we give little attention to eternity.” Few give thought to what happens after death. Such a monumental, eternity-altering decision seldom reaches priority level. God will not make that choice for us. He does not force anyone to choose heaven. Those who accept His forgiveness and mercy will deposit their riches in heaven, “the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

The question is often asked, “How do you know you will be received into heaven?” I answer as my father did. I belong, body and soul, not to myself but to my faithful Savior, who paid for all my sins wholeheartedly. That makes me want to live for Him now and forevermore.

The picture in my mind of my earthly father worshipping at the feet of my Father in heaven puts a longing in my soul for that eternal home. True followers of Jesus Christ should never get too comfortable in this world because we do not belong here. Like my father, we are simply passing through.

The Bible says, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Someone said, “What we call life is a journey to death. What we call death is the gateway to life.”

Billy Graham understood the dilemma that the apostle Paul wrote about in Philippians—whether to live life on earth or depart from the earth to live in the presence of God. Paul said, “Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:20–23).

In his book *Facing Death—And the Life After*, my father stated, “I’m not afraid to die, for I know the joys of heaven are waiting. My greatest desire is to live today in anticipation of tomorrow and be ready to be welcomed into His home for all eternity. Will you be making the journey with me?”¹⁰

In other words, are you ready to stand before Almighty God? This was the question that underscored my father’s preaching ministry. I came to understand his driving passion that profoundly affected my life in significant ways. My father was interested in the souls of mankind and longed to take the world with him on the never-ending journey of eternal life with Christ.

Author and educator Herbert Lockyer said, “Where is there a country without sin, crime, lawlessness, bloodshed, disease, death, sorrow and heartache? . . . In God’s country there are . . . no undertakers because there are no graves. . . . Who would not yearn for this better and more desirable country in which there are no separations, no broken homes, no drunkards, no prisons, no hospitals, no beggars? . . . Are you not homesick for heaven?”¹¹

I am now more homesick for heaven than ever. Why? Because the two people on earth that influenced my life most are together again in God’s country.

While I have been entrusted with the mantle of leading the BGEA and am privileged to preach in crusade pulpits around the world, I have not stepped into Billy Graham’s shoes. I do pray, however, that my eyes will always be fixed on my Father in heaven as I proclaim His great truths—just as my father pointed multitudes of people to the Savior who is waiting with open arms to forgive.

My father’s soul is very much alive, and someday I will be joined again with him in heaven. Then I will clearly see all things through my Father’s eyes.